

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend Claims 1-3 and 11-12 as follows:

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1. (Currently Amended) A method for automatically assigning a group of agents to a plurality of available schedules, comprising the steps of:

- determining preferences for a plurality of factors for each agent;
- assigning an order of importance for the plurality of factors for each employee;
- for each factor, determining a difference value between a plurality of schedules and each agent's preference for that factor;
- assigning the difference value for each factor to an assigned vector for each agent wherein the factor having the highest importance is assigned to the highest order bits of the vector and the remaining factors are assigned to subsequent orders of bits in their assigned order of importance;
- for each agent, calculating an unassigned vector for each schedule not assigned to the agent;
- assigning the schedule having the lowest vector to each agent; and
- wherein one or more of the steps are performed by one or more electronic processing devices.

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2. (Currently Amended) A method for automatically assigning a group of agents to a plurality of available schedules, comprising the steps of:

- determining preferences for a plurality of factors for each agent;
- assigning an order of importance for the plurality of factors for each employee;
- for each factor, determining a difference value between a plurality of schedules and each agent's preference for that factor;
- assigning the difference value for each factor to an assigned vector for each agent wherein the factor having the highest importance is assigned to the highest order bits of the

vector and the remaining factors are assigned to subsequent orders of bits in their assigned order of importance;

for each agent, calculating an unassigned vector for each schedule not assigned to the agent;

assigning the schedule having the lowest vector to each agent;

The method of Claim 1 wherein unassigned vectors are calculated for each agent based on the assigned schedules and based on schedules where selected factors are swapped between schedules; and

wherein one or more of the steps are performed by one or more electronic processing devices.

3. (Currently Amended) A method for automatically assigning a group of agents to a plurality of available schedules, comprising the steps of:

determining preferences for a plurality of factors for each agent;

assigning an order of importance for the plurality of factors for each employee;

for each factor, determining a difference value between a plurality of schedules and each agent's preference for that factor;

assigning the difference value for each factor to an assigned vector for each agent wherein the factor having the highest importance is assigned to the highest order bits of the vector and the remaining factors are assigned to subsequent orders of bits in their assigned order of importance;

for each agent, calculating an unassigned vector for each schedule not assigned to the agent;

assigning the schedule having the lowest vector to each agent;

The method of Claim 1 wherein the unassigned vectors are first calculated for a highest ranked agent and the schedule having the lowest vector is assigned to the highest ranked agent, and further including the steps of:

(a) determining the lowest vector for the next highest ranked agent,

(b) repeating step a until each agent's schedule has been compared to every other agent's schedule; and
wherein one or more of the steps are performed by one or more electronic processing devices.

4. (Original) The method of Claim 3 wherein the agents are ranked according to seniority.

5. (Original) The method of Claim 3 wherein the agents are ranked according to performance.

6. (Original) The method of Claim 3 wherein a schedule may only be assigned from a higher ranked agent to a lower ranked agent if such assignment will decrease the lower ranked agent's vector without increasing the vector of the higher ranked agent.

7. (Original) The method of Claim 1 wherein the plurality of factors is selected from the group of start times, break times, lunch times, days off, end time, lunch length, split shift parameters and hours worked.

8. (Original) The method of Claim 1 wherein the plurality of schedules are preliminarily assigned schedules.

9. (Original) The method of Claim 1 wherein the plurality of schedules are a pool of schedules.

10. (Original) A computer program product for operation on a computer for assigning a group of agents to a plurality of available schedules, comprising:
means for determining preferences for a plurality of factors for each agent;

means for assigning an order of importance for the plurality of factors for each agent;
means, for each factor, for determining a difference value between a preliminarily assigned schedule and each agent's preference for that factor;

means for assigning the difference value for each factor to an assigned vector for each agent wherein the factor having the highest importance is assigned to the highest order bits of the vector and the remaining factors are assigned to subsequent orders of bits in their assigned order of importance;

means, for each agent, for calculating an unassigned vector for each schedule not assigned to the agent;

means for assigning the schedule having the lowest vector to each agent.

11. (Currently Amended) A computer program product for operation on a computer for assigning a group of agents to a plurality of available schedules, comprising:

means for determining preferences for a plurality of factors for each agent;

means for assigning an order of importance for the plurality of factors for each agent;

means, for each factor, for determining a difference value between a preliminarily assigned schedule and each agent's preference for that factor;

means for assigning the difference value for each factor to an assigned vector for each agent wherein the factor having the highest importance is assigned to the highest order bits of the vector and the remaining factors are assigned to subsequent orders of bits in their assigned order of importance;

means, for each agent, for calculating an unassigned vector for each schedule not assigned to the agent;

means for assigning the schedule having the lowest vector to each agent; and

The product of Claim 10 wherein the means for calculating unassigned vectors calculates unassigned vectors for each agent based on the schedules not assigned to the agent and based on schedules where selected factors are swapped between schedules.

12. (Currently Amended) A computer program product for operation on a computer for assigning a group of agents to a plurality of available schedules, comprising:

means for determining preferences for a plurality of factors for each agent;

means for assigning an order of importance for the plurality of factors for each agent;

means, for each factor, for determining a difference value between a preliminarily assigned schedule and each agent's preference for that factor;

means for assigning the difference value for each factor to an assigned vector for each agent wherein the factor having the highest importance is assigned to the highest order bits of the vector and the remaining factors are assigned to subsequent orders of bits in their assigned order of importance;

means, for each agent, for calculating an unassigned vector for each schedule not assigned to the agent;

means for assigning the schedule having the lowest vector to each agent; and

~~The product of Claim 10~~ wherein the unassigned vectors are first calculated for a highest ranked agent and the schedule having the lowest vector is assigned to the highest ranked agent, and further including:

(a) means for determining the lowest vector for a next highest ranked agent,

(b) means for repeatedly applying said means for determining the lowest vector until each agent's schedule has been compared to every other agent's schedule.

13. (Previously Amended) The product of Claim 12 wherein the agents are ranked according to seniority.

14. (Previously Amended) The product of Claim 12 wherein the agents are ranked according to performance.

15. (Original) The product of Claim 12 wherein a schedule may only be assigned from a higher ranked agent to a lower ranked agent if such assignment will decrease the lower ranked agent's vector without increasing the vector of the higher ranked agent.

16. (Original) The product of Claim 10 wherein the plurality of factors is selected from the group of start times, break times, lunch times, days off, end time, lunch length, split shift parameters and hours worked.

17. (Previously Amended) The product of Claim 10 wherein the plurality of schedules are preliminarily assigned schedules.

18. (Previously Amended) The product of Claim 10 wherein the plurality of schedules are a pool of schedules.